(c) The status of the medical reimbursement claims submitted by the beneficiaries with the CGHS Directorate are available on Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's website viz. WWW.MOHFW.NIC.IN

(d) The bills of the CGHS Authorised Local Chemists are processed on a first-come-first-served basis.

(e) From December, 2004, onwards, the amount reimbursed against the medical claims of CGHS pensioner cardholders is directly credited to their Bank Accounts through the Electronic Clearance System (ECS).

Naturopathy System of Medicine

†*608. SHRI BALVANT *ALIAS* BALAPTE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recognized "Naturopathy" as a system of medicine;

(b) if so, whether guidelines governing qualification, classification and syllabus for the doctors of this system have been prepared; and

(c) if not, whether there is any such scheme under consideration of Government?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS): (a) to (c) There is no central law for regulating education and practice in Naturopathy at present. As such, there are no legal provisions or guidelines governing qualification, classification and syllabus for the practitioners of naturopathy at central level. The question of setting up of a statutory body for regulating education and practice in Yoga and Naturopathy was examined in the past. In view of the small number of colleges imparting Degree Courses and the limited infrastructure available with most of the State Governments, it was decided that the time was not yet ripe to set up a statutory body for Yoga and Naturopathy. The State Governments have been advised to set up their own bodies for regulating education in Yoga and Naturopathy in the respective States.

MNCs' Monopoly in grain market

†*610. SHRI SURENDRA LATH:
SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether it is a fact that sale and purchase of foodgrains is undertaken in India through markets meant for it, whereas MNCs are trying to establish their monopoly over grain market by distorting agricultural marketing laws and driving wedge into markets;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that E-chaupal of ITC in Madhya Pradesh is an example of this move and whether establishment of monopolies of MNCs in the grain markets would not eliminate employment opportunities fully and whether the farmers of the country would not become bonded labourers; and

(c) if so, the remedial measures being taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Sale and purchase of foodgrains is undertaken through markets set up by the State Governments under the provisions of the Agriculture Produce marketing (Regulation) Act (APMC Act). Trade is carried on in the market area under the supervision and control of the market Committee set up under the Act. As a consequence of the regulation, no other person/ agency can set up market for agricultural commodities in notified areas. Processing industries cannot buy directly from farmers except through licensed traders and notified markets. Farmers are restricted from entering into a direct contract with any manufacturer as the produce is required to be canalized through the regulated markets. These restrictions are working as disincentive to farmers, traders and industries. State Governments have, therefore, been advised to bring changes in the APMC Act to allow direct marketing and contract farming, in order to promote competitive markets.

Madhya Pradesh is first amongst the States which have implemented these reforms by amending the APMC Act to facilitate direct sale by producer to the buyer and firect purchase by the buyer from the producer. A provision is also made in the Act for setting up of private market and promotion of direct marketing. Farmers have the option to sell his produce either in the nearby mandi or at the purchase centers as per his convenience. Thus, there is no monopoly of MNCs over the grain markets.

(b) and (c) E-choupal is a project of ITC Limited, an Indian company, which offers farmers the facilities of information dissemination through internet viz. farming best practices, weather conditions and prices of various crops; purchase of farmers' produce at ITC buying centres approved by respective States' APMC rules and selling quality farm inputs and other consumer goods. Farmers are benefited by using these facilities. This initiative has provided more freedom to farmer to sell his agricultural produce

to an agency offering better price at his doorstep. Within such an open and transparent arrangement there is no question of scope for employment or making the farmers bonded labours.

Amount received from the Union Carbide as compensation

†*611. SHRI LAXMINARAYAN SHARMA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are still having the balance amount received from the Union Carbide as compensation;

(b) if so, details of such amount;

(c) the purpose for which this amount, if any, have been kept as reserve; and

(d) whether this amount would be made available to the Madhya Pradesh Government for the schemes being run for the welfare of gas victims?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS AND MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) The unspent amount is lying with the Reserve Bank of India in the name of the Welfare Commissioner.

(b) As informed by the Office of the Welfare Commissioner, Bhopal Gas Victims, Bhopal, an amount of approximately Rs. 1000.00 crores is lying with the Reserve Bank of India.

(c) This amount is being utilized for the distribution of compensation amount to the original claimants on *pro-rata* basis, in accordance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court's order dated 19th July, 2004.

(d) No, Sir. In its judgement dated 19th July, 2004, the Supreme Court has directed the Welfare Commissioner to disburse the unspent amount only to the persons whose claims have been settled, on a *pro-rata* basis.

Assistance to Punjab for Fertilizers, Seeds, etc.

*612. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to formulate any policy in consultation with Punjab Government to provide fertilizers, seeds and other agriculture equipments to farmers at reasonable prices; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.